

Milestones in the History of Slavery

1441

The first cargo of African slaves arrive in Lisbon with Antam Goncalves.

1481

The Portuguese build a fort at Elmina on the Gold Coast as a base for their slave trade.

1492

African servants, slaves, and explorers come to the New World with the first Spanish and French explorers.

1501

The Spanish crown officially approves the use of African slaves in the New World.

1502

The Portuguese land the first cargo of slaves in the New World.

1513

Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa lands in South America and finds a community of black people already living there, suggesting that Africans “discovered” America before Columbus.

1619

Twenty Africans arrive in Jamestown, Virginia as indentured servants.

1620

The Mayflower lands at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

1621

The Dutch West India Company is chartered, bringing Dutch merchants into the Atlantic Slave Trade.

1627

The English situate their first sugar colony on Barbados; Jamaica, St. Croix, Guadeloupe, and other Caribbean islands are soon claimed by European nations eager to profit from sugar industry. Of the approximately 12 million enslaved Africans brought to the New World between 1450 and 1870, half go to these "sugar islands."

1663

Carolina settlers are offered twenty acres for every male African slave and ten acres for every female brought to the colony.

1667

The number of blacks on English sugar plantations on the Caribbean island of Barbados reached 40,000, nearly twice the number of whites.

1670

English settlers leave Barbados for South Carolina and choose Albemarle Point on the Ashley River for their first home.

1672

The English form the Royal African Company.

1674

The Royal African Company begins shipping captured Africans directly from African Guinea to the American mainland colonies, initiating a large-scale slave trade.

1679

The Lords Proprietors order the settlement to be moved from Albemarle Point to Oyster Point, which lay at the mouth of the Ashley and Cooper rivers, and to be named Charlestown.

1688

Quakers in Germantown, Pennsylvania, denounces slavery in America's first recorded formal protest against the institution.

1690

February 7. The first South Carolina law relating solely to slavery is enacted.

1696

March 16. South Carolina passes the Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Slaves, a comprehensive code for regulating blacks based on the Barbados slave code of 1688.

1698

October 8. Afraid of the growing number of blacks who had been imported as slaves, the South Carolina Assembly passed a law granting £13 to anyone who would bring a white male servant into the province.

England's Parliament ends the Royal African Company's monopoly on the slave trade. Many more entrepreneurs enter the trade, leading to stiff competition and cheaper prices for slaves.

1700

The estimated population of the province, excluding tribal Indians, was 5,500. The population of blacks is not known, but was probably about 2,400.

1700-1710

As the slave trade expands, more than twice as many Africans arrive in colonial America as in the entire previous century.

1703

May 6. In order to break up the brisk trade in Indian slaves, the Assembly placed a duty of twenty shillings per head on each Indian slave exported. Many were exported to the West Indies and to New England.

1708

Governor Sir Nathaniel Johnson reported population figures that revealed a black majority in South Carolina for the first time.

Black slaves	4,100
Whites	4,080
<u>Indian slaves</u>	<u>1,400</u>
Total	9,580

1720

Several slaves are burned alive and hung and others are banished after they are implicated in a revolt near Charleston, South Carolina.

The estimated population of the colony, excluding tribal Indians, was 18,500, of whom nearly 12,000 were black slaves.

1721

A new act empowered watchmen in Charleston to stop Negroes on sight. The statewide patrol system that remained in effect until the Civil War evolved from this legislation.

1730

The estimated population of the colony, excluding tribal Indians, was 30,000, of whom approximately two-thirds were black slaves.

August. The first slave conspiracy in British South Carolina was detected and the ringleaders were immediately executed.

1739

September 9. Forty-four black slaves and thirty white colonists are killed in the Stono slave rebellion near Charleston, South Carolina. At least 250 such slave rebellions or conspiracies occur during the 1700s.

1740

The estimated population of the colony, excluding tribal Indians, was 60,000, of whom about two-thirds were black slaves.

April 5. After the Stono Rebellion, the slave trade was greatly reduced by placing prohibitive taxes on the sale of recently imported slaves. The rate rose as high as £100 currency.

May 10. The basic law for regulating the life and activities of Negro slaves was passed. This slave code endured with little change until the Civil War.

1743

September 12. The Reverend Alexander Garden (d. 1773) opened a school for blacks in Charles Town. The purpose was to train them "in principles of Christianity and the fundamentals of education, to serve as schoolmasters to their people."

1750

The estimated population of the colony, excluding tribal Indians, was 65,000, of whom about two-thirds were black slaves.

1760

The estimated population of the colony, excluding tribal Indians, was 84,000, of whom about 52,000 were black slaves.

1765

Christmas. There was threat of a slave insurrection.

1766

January 1. On this date the slave trade was effectively cut off for a period of three years by the act which had been passed on August 25, 1764, to impose a £100 tax on each slave imported.

1770

The estimated population of the province, excluding tribal Indians, was 130,000, of whom about 80,000 were black slaves.

A free black man, Crispus Attucks, is shot by British soldiers in the infamous Boston Massacre, becoming the first American casualty of the American Revolution.

1772

The Somerset decision puts slavery on the road to extinction in England.

1773

African-born Phillis Wheatley publishes Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral in England

A black Christian church opens in South Carolina, reflecting the rapid growth of Christianity, the "white man's religion," among American blacks.

1775

Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations casts doubt on the economic efficiency of slavery.

One of the first independent black Baptist congregations develops in Silver Bluff, South Carolina.

1775-1783

During the Revolutionary War an estimated fifty thousand slaves escape to join the British. Approximately ten thousand blacks serve in the Continental Army.

1776

American Declaration of Independence proclaims that all men are created equal.

Thomas Jefferson drafts the Declaration of Independence. The document is adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4th after passages denouncing the slave trade are deleted.

1780

The estimated population of the state was 180,000, of whom about 97,000 were black slaves.

1782

December 14. Charlestown was evacuated by British forces, who took away over 3,000 Loyalists and 5,000 slaves.

1783

David Ramsey wrote that by this year Gideon DuPont had perfected the tidal culture of rice. It is impossible to pin to one date such a fundamental change in cultivation of rice, the state's leading staple. Yet by the 1780s rice was being grown in the river swamps where the fluctuation of the tides could be used to flood and drain the fields.

August 13. Charleston was incorporated as a city and the name of the city was henceforth "Charleston."

1786

The importation of new slaves ends in all states but South Carolina and Georgia.

1787

The Continental Congress prohibits slavery in the Northwest Territory. The U.S. Constitution is approved with three clauses protecting slavery.

March 28. The foreign slave trade was cut off for a period of three years. As this legislation was several times renewed, the slave trade was cut off until 1803.

British abolitionists found the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

1790 SC Federal Census

U.S. Census

White 140,178

Slave	107,094
Free Black	1,801
Total	249,073

November 1. The Brown Fellowship Society is organized by Charleston's free mulatto elite.

1791-1801

A violent slave insurrection erupts in Santo Domingo. The Haitian Revolution is the only rebellion to liberate an entire slave population.

1793

Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin, a machine that separates cotton fiber from its seed. This leads to increased cotton cultivation in the Southern states and a greater demand for slaves.

The first sizable cotton shipments were made from Charleston. The recent invention of the roller gin Abraham Eve for sea island cotton and the saw-toothed gin by Eli Whitney for upland cotton made the increase in production possible.

Congress passes the Fugitive Slave Act, which makes it a criminal offense to harbor a fugitive slave or prevent his arrest.

1798

Toussaint Louverture expels the British and becomes the most powerful leader in French colony of Saint Domingue.

1800

Gabriel Prosser's planned slave rebellion in Virginia fails, and he and his followers are hanged.

December 20. A law was passed which made it more difficult to emancipate slaves. Until 1800 a slave could be manumitted by will or deed. After 1800 freeholders of the neighborhood had to certify that the freed person could support his or her family.

1800 SC Federal Census

White	196,255
Slave	146,151
Free Black	3,185
Total	345,591

1803

December 17. The foreign slave trade is reopened. More than 40,000 slaves would be imported during the next five years.

South Carolina opens an African slave trade with Latin America.

The Louisiana Territory is purchased from France.

1804

Haiti becomes an independent nation.

1806

October 28. A Charleston city ordinance restricts the movement of free blacks.

1807

Britain abolishes the slave trade as of May 1st.

Two boatloads of enslaved Africans arriving in Charleston, SC starve themselves to death rather than submit to slavery.

1808

January 1. The foreign slave trade is brought to an end by federal law, at the earliest possible date under the U.S. Constitution although smuggling continues.

Many South Carolina Quakers move to the Old Northwest in order to escape the institution of slavery.

1808-1860

Approximately 250,000 Africans are illegally imported as slaves.

1810

The third census of the United States showed that the institution of slavery had spread throughout the state.

1810 SC Federal Census

White	214, 196
Slave	196,365
<u>Free Black</u>	<u>4,554</u>
Total	415,115

1812-1815

The War of 1812 helps secure America's boundaries; western settlement and slave labor enable Alabama and Mississippi to become the heart of the "Cotton Kingdom."

1816

The American Colonization Society, which seeks to return slave and free blacks to Africa, is founded.

June. A planned slave insurrection is discovered in Camden.

1817-1818

African Americans join Seminole Indians in their fight to keep their Florida homelands.

1820

The Missouri Compromise allows Missouri to enter the United States as a slave state but outlaws slavery north of the 36°30' parallel.

December 20. Henceforth no slave could be freed without the formal consent of the state legislature. Free persons of color are forbidden from entering the state.

1820 SC Federal Census

White	237,440
Slave	258,475
<u>Free Black</u>	<u>6,826</u>
Total	502,741

1821

May 15. Sarah Grimké sails for Philadelphia thus making a statement in opposition to slavery. **1822**

Denmark Vesey, a free black, is executed after his five-year effort to organize a slave rebellion in Charleston, South Carolina.

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June-July. Fear of a slave insurrection sweeps Charleston.

June 17, 18. The first arrests are made as the slave insurrection was detected.

June 22. Denmark Vesey, a free black, is apprehended as the ringleader.

June 28. Denmark Vesey is convicted of inciting an insurrection by a court of magistrates and freeholders.

July 2. Denmark Vesey is hanged.

Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on Calhoun Street was closed in response to the Vesey insurrection. Reorganized in 1865, it became a focal point for black political activity.

December 21. The first of the Seamen Acts is passed. Any free black coming into Charleston on a vessel would be lodged in the local jail during the stay of the vessel in port. If the captain would not pay the cost of board and lodging, the black person could be sold into slavery.

The American Colonization Society buys land in western Africa for the few blacks who want to return. The nation is called Liberia.

1823

South Carolina passes a second Seamen Act.

1829

Daniel A. Payne, a free black, opens a school for black children in Charleston.

David Walker issues his Appeal in which he denounces slavery and calls on African Americans to rise up and throw off the yoke of slavery.

The Reverend William Capers began his Methodist mission to slaves.

July 23. A planned slave insurrection is discovered in Georgetown County.

November. Angelina Grimké leaves South Carolina her native state to join her sister Sarah in the North where the Grimké sisters become foremost among the abolitionists.

1830

1830 SC Federal Census

White	257,863
<u>Black</u>	<u>323,322</u>
Total	581,185

1831

January. William Lloyd Garrison publishes the first issue of The Liberator, his abolitionist newspaper.

August. Nat Turner leads a slave revolt in Southampton, Virginia that results in the deaths of sixty whites and more than two hundred blacks, including Turner who is captured and executed.

1833

The American Anti-Slavery Society is founded, signaling the beginning of organized white protest against slavery.

Slavery is abolished in the British Empire.

December 19. Capital punishment for "a slave or a free person of color" is restricted to hanging.

1835

May. Daniel A. Payne closed his school for blacks in Charleston and left the state.

Fugitive slaves join the Seminoles against the militias of Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee to keep their homelands.

1837

February 6. John C. Calhoun defended slavery in the U.S. Senate as "a positive good."

1838

Frederick Douglass escapes from slavery to New York City, where he establishes himself as a leading black abolitionist.

1840**1840 SC Federal Census**

White	259,084
Slave	327,038
<u>Free Black</u>	<u>8,276</u>
Total	594,398

1844

The Methodists split into northern and southern churches over the question of whether a bishop may or may not own slaves.

1845

The Baptists in the nation split over the question of slavery.

1847

Renowned black abolitionist Frederick Douglass publishes abolitionist newspaper the *North Star*.

1849

Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery in Maryland to freedom in Philadelphia; she will return to the South nineteen times to help slaves escape via the Underground Railroad.

July 13-14. After a massive jailbreak by slaves in Charleston, a mob threatened to burn the Calvary Episcopal Church which was under construction to serve the black community.

1850

The Compromise of 1850 is passed with the most repressive fugitive slave law ever passed in the United States.

1850 SC Federal Census

White	274,563
<u>Black</u>	<u>393,944</u>
Total	668,507

1852

Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes her antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which becomes a driving force behind the abolition movement..

1854

The Republican Party is formed on the premise that slavery must be kept out of the western territories. Southerners are threatened by the party's position.

1857

The U.S. Supreme Court in *Scott v. Sanford* rules that Missouri slave, Dred Scott, did not gain his freedom by living with his master in the free state of Illinois. The court declares that as a slave, Scott is a citizen neither of Missouri nor of the United States, and “had no rights the white man was bound to respect.” The decision moves the nation closer to civil war.

1859

White abolitionist John Brown leads a slave revolt against the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown is captured and hanged. Fear of revolt spreads among slaveholders across the nation.

1860

Abraham Lincoln is elected president on the Republican platform of restricting slavery in the territories.

South Carolina secedes from the Union in reaction to Lincoln’s election.

1860 SC Federal Census

Whites	291,300
Slaves	402,406
Free Blacks	9,914
<u>Others</u>	<u>88</u>
Total	703,708

1861

Following the lead of South Carolina, the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas break from the United States and form the Confederate States of America.

April 12. Civil War begins when Confederates fire on a United States ship sent to re-supply Fort Sumter, with food and supplies. After a fierce, 33-hour battle, the Union commander surrenders, and the nation is at war. Six more Southern states secede and join the Confederacy.

1861-1865

The Civil War follows the secession of the southern states amid concerns over the preservation of slavery. An estimated 250,000 African Americans, some of whom were slaves, serve as soldiers.

1862

Penn Normal and Industrial School, founded at Frogmore on St. Helena Island by northern missionaries, began the education of the blacks on the Sea Islands. This school was incorporated into the Beaufort County system in the 1940s.

May 13. Robert Smalls, a black pilot, with a black crew sailed in the Confederate steamer Planter out of Charleston and joined the Union Fleet.

November. The first black regiment was mustered into service in South Carolina. The First Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers was commanded by Colonel Thomas W. Higginson, a white man from Massachusetts. During the war over 5,000 black South Carolinians joined the Union Army.

1863

January 1. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, announced in September 1862, takes effect, freeing slaves held in the Confederate states.

June 2. Harriet Tubman leads Union troops in a raid up the Combahee River. This is the only time a woman has led American troops in battle.

July 18. In the charge of the 54th Massachusetts against Fort Wagner, Robert Gould Shaw is killed as well as many former slaves who are now fighting for their freedom.

1865

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, organized by a black congregation, is established in Charleston.

Daniel A. Payne returns to Charleston as the bishop appointed to establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the state.

January 16. Sherman issues Special Field Order No. 15 appropriating the Sea Islands and coastal lands for freed slaves. General Rufus Saxton was given the task of assigning the head of each family forty acres and the temporary use of a military horse or mule.

March 3. Congress establishes the Freedmen's Bureau. The life of the Bureau was extended on July 18, 1866, and it functioned in South Carolina until June 30, 1872.

April 14. President Lincoln is assassinated.

September 13-27. A convention meets in Columbia and draws up the Constitution of 1865. The "Black Codes" are adopted under its authority. Article XI abolishes state offices in Charleston, thereby centralizing government in Columbia.

October 1. Avery Normal Institute is organized by Francis L. Cardozo.

November 13. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery throughout the United States, is ratified.